



"OVER THERE"

The Thrill and the Hell of the Trenches, Described by an American Boy.

Sergeant Alexander McClintock of Lexington, Ky., and the Canadian Army Has Gripping Tale That Every American Will Read, For He Tells the Facts—Unadorned. Wounded, a Distinguished Conduct Medal Man, He Was Invalided Home, but Is Going "Out There" Again to Fight For Uncle Sam and His Allies. An Inspiring, Interesting, Personal Narrative, Full of the Spirit and Atmosphere of the Trenches.

SERGEANT MCCLINTOCK.

No. 3. "Over the Top and Give 'Em Hell!"

By Sergeant Alexander McClintock, D. C. M., 87th Overseas Batt., Canadian Gren. Guards.

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Sergeant McClintock, who has seen service in France, was decorated for bravery, wounded, invalided home and is now endeavoring to get a commission in our army. A commission in the Canadian army awaits him if he returns to join his old command. In the first and second articles he graphically describes his training, his trip to France and the elaborate preparations made for a bomb raid on the German trenches.

As we climbed out of the shelter of our trenches for my first—and, perhaps, my last, I thought—adventure in No Man's Land the word was passed:

"Over the top and give 'em hell!"

That is the British Tommies' battle cry as they charge the enemy, and it has often sounded up and down those long lines in western France as the British, Canadian and Australian soldiers go out to the fight and the death.

We were divided into six parties of ten men, each party having separate duties to perform. We crouched forward, moving slowly in single file, stumbling into shell holes and over dead men—some very long dead—and managing to keep in touch with each



"Over the top and give 'em hell!"

other though the machine gun bullets began to drop men almost immediately. Once we were started we were neither fearful nor rattled. We had been drilled so long and so carefully that each man knew just what he was to do, and he kept right on doing it unless he got hit. To me it seemed the ground was moving back under me. The first ten yards were the toughest. The thing was perfectly organized. Our first party of ten was composed of signallers. They were paying out wires and carrying telephones to be used during the fifteen minutes of our stay in the German trenches in communicating with our battalion headquarters. A telephone code had been arranged, using the names of our commanding officers as symbols. "Rexford 1" meant "First prisoners being sent back"; "Rexford 2" meant "Our first wounded being sent over"; "Rexford 3" meant "We have entered German trench." The code was very complete, and the signallers had been drilled in it for a week. In case the telephone wires were cut, the signallers were to send messages back by the use of rifle grenades. These are rifle projectiles which carry little metal cylinders to contain written messages and which burst into flame when they strike the earth, so that they can be easily found at night. The officer in charge of the signallers was to remain at the point of entrance, with his eyes on his watch. It was his duty to sound a warning signal five minutes before the end of our time in the German trenches.

The leader of every party of ten also had a whistle with which to repeat the warning blast and then the final blast, when each man was to drop everything and get back to our artillery fire. We were not to leave any dead or wounded in the German trench on account of the information which the Germans might thus obtain. Before starting on the raid we had removed all marks from our persons, including even our identification disks. Except for the signallers, each party of ten was similarly organized. First, there were two bayonet men, each with an electric flashlight attached to his rifle, so as to give light for the di-

rection of a bayonet thrust and controlled by a button at the left hand grasp of the rifle. Besides his rifle, all of these men carried six or eight Mills No. 5 hand grenades, weighing from a pound and five ounces to a pound and seven ounces each.

The Lineup.

They are the same shape as a turkey egg and a little larger. Upon withdrawing the firing pin a lever sets a four second fuse going. One of these grenades will clean out anything living in a ten foot trench section. It will also kill the man who is throwing it if he holds it more than four seconds after he has pulled the pin. The third man of each ten was an expert bomb thrower, equipped as lightly as possible to give him freedom of action. He carried a few bombs himself, but the main supply was carried by the fourth man, who was not to throw any unless the third man became a casualty, in which case No. 4 was to take his place. The third man also carried a knob kerrie, a heavy bludgeon to be used in whacking an enemy over the head. Ours were made by fastening heavy steel nuts on a stout stick of wood, a very businesslike contrivance. The fourth man, or bomb carrier, besides having a large supply of Mills grenades, had smoke bombs, to be used in smoking the Germans out of dugouts and later, if necessary, in covering our retreat, and also fumite bombs. The latter are very dangerous to handle. They contain a mixture of petrol and phosphorous and weigh three pounds each. On exploding they release a liquid fire which will burn through steel.

The fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth in line were called utility men. They were to take the places of any of the first four who might become casualties. In addition they carried two Stokes gun bombs each. These weigh nine pounds apiece, have six second fuses and can be used in wrecking dugouts. The ninth and tenth men were sappers, carrying slabs of gun-cotton and several hundred yards of instantaneous fuse. This explosive is used in demolishing machine gun emplacements and mine saps. The sappers were to lay their charges while we were at work in the trenches and explode them as soon as our party was far enough out on the return journey to be safe from this danger. In addition to these parties of ten there were three of us who carried bombs and had orders to keep near the three officers, to take the place of any one of them that might go down and meanwhile to use our own judgment about helping the jolly old party along. I was assigned one of the three.

In addition to the raiding party proper there was a relay call across No Man's Land at ten paces interval, making a chain to show us our way back, to assist the wounded and, in case of opportunity or necessity, to reinforce us. They were ordered not to leave their positions when we began to come back until the last man of our party had been accounted for. The final section of our entourage was composed of twelve stretcher bearers, who had been specially trained with us, so that they would be familiar with the trench section which we were to raid.

The Raid and Its Result.

There were two things which made it possible for our raiding party to get started across No Man's Land. One was the momentary quickening of the blood which follows a big and unaccustomed dose of rum, and the other



We Were Crawling About on All Fours.

was a sort of subconscious, mechanical confidence in our undertaking, which was a result of the scores of times we had gone through every prearranged movement in our practice duplicate German trenches behind our lines. Without either of those influences we simply could not have left the shelter and faced what was before us.

An intensified bombardment from our guns began just as soon as we had climbed "over the top" and were lining up for the journey across. "Lin-

ing up" is not just a suitable term. We were crawling about on all fours just far enough out in No Man's Land to be under the edge of the German shell fire and taking what shelter we could in shell holes while our leaders picked the way to start across. The extra heavy bombardment had warned the Germans that something was about to happen. They sent up star shells and "S O S" signals until there was a glare over the torn earth like that which you see at the grand finish of a Pain's fireworks display, and meanwhile they sprayed No Man's Land with streams of machine gun fire. In the face of that we started.

It would be absurd to say that we were not frightened. Thinking men could not help but be afraid. If we were pallid, which undoubtedly we were, the black upon our faces hid it, but our fear struck voices were not disguised. They trembled and our teeth chattered.

We sneaked out single file, making our way from shell hole to shell hole, nearly all the time on all fours, crawling quickly over the flat places between this small shelter. The Germans had not sighted us, but they were squirting machine gun bullets all over the place promiscuously, like a man watering a lawn with a garden hose, and they were bound to get some of us. Behind me I heard cries of pain and groans, but it made little impression on my benumbed intelligence from the mere fact that whatever had happened had happened to one of the other sections of ten and not to my own. It seemed, some way or other, no affair to concern me. Then a man in front of me doubled up suddenly and rolled into a shell hole. That simply made me remember very clearly that I was not to stop on account of it. It was some



It Seemed That the Whole Earth Behind Me Rose in the Air.

one else's business to pick that man up. Next, according to the queer psychology of battle, I began to lose my sensation of fear and nervousness. After I saw a second man go down I gave my attention principally to a consideration of the irregularities of the German parapet ahead of us, picking out the spot where we were to enter the trench. It seems silly to say it, but I seemed to get some sort of satisfaction out of the realization that we had lost the percentage which we might be expected to lose going over. Now, it seemed, the rest of us were safe until we should reach the next phase of our undertaking. I heard directions given, and I gave some myself. My voice was firm. It surprised me, and I felt almost calm. Our artillery had so torn up the German barb wire that it gave us no trouble at all. We walked through it with only a few scratches. When we reached the low, sandbag parapet of the enemy trench we tossed in a few bombs and followed them right over as soon as they had exploded. There wasn't a German in sight. They were all in their dugouts. But we knew pretty well where every dugout was located, and we rushed for the entrances with our bombs. Everything seemed to be going just as we had expected it to go. Two Germans ran plump into me as I was rounding a ditch angle with a bomb in my hand. They had their hands up, and each of them yelled:

"Mercy, kamerad!"

I passed them back, to be sent to the rear, and the man who received them from me chuckled and told them to move lively. The German trenches were practically just as we had expected to find them, according to our sample. They were so nearly similar to the duplicate section in which we had practiced that we had no trouble finding our way in them. I was just thinking that really the only tough part of the job remaining would be getting back across No Man's Land when it seemed that the whole earth behind me rose in the air. For a moment I was stunned and half blinded by dirt blown into my face. When I was able to see I discovered that all which lay behind me was a mass of upturned earth and rock, with here and there a man shaking himself or scrambling out of it or lying still.

Just two minutes after we went into their trench the Germans had exploded a mine under their parapet. I have always believed that in some way or another they had learned what spot we were to raid and had prepared for us. Whether that's true or not, one thing is certain—that mine blew our organization, as we would say in Kentucky, "plumb to h—l." And it killed or disabled more than half of our party.

Great Confusion.

There was much confusion among those of us who remained on our feet. Some one gave an order to retire, and some one countermanded it. More Germans came out of their dugouts, but instead of surrendering as per our original schedule they threw bombs among us. It became apparent that

we would be killed or captured if we stuck there and that we wouldn't get any more prisoners. I looked at my wrist watch and saw that there remained but five minutes more of the time which had been allotted for our stay in the trench, so I blew my whistle and started back. I had seen Private Green (No. 177,250) knocked down by a bomb in the next section, and I picked him up and carried him out over the wrecked parapet. I took shelter with him in the first shell hole, but I found that he was dead and left him there. A few yards farther back toward our line I found Lance Corporal Glass in a shell hole with part of his hip shot away. He said he thought he could get back if I helped him, and I started with him. Private Hunter, who had been in a neighboring shell hole, came to our assistance, and between us Hunter and I got Glass to our front trench.

We found them lining up the survivors of our party for a roll call. That showed so many missing that Major Lewis, formerly of the Montreal Star, called for volunteers to go out in No Man's Land and try to find some of our men. Corporal Charleson, Private Saunders and I went out. We brought in two wounded, and we saw a number of dead, but on account of their blackened faces were unable to recognize them. The scouts later brought in several bodies.

Of the sixty odd men who had started in our party forty-three were found to be casualties—killed, wounded or missing. The missing list was the longest. The names of those men were marked "m. b. k." (missing; believed killed) on our rolls. I have learned since that some few of them have been reported through Switzerland as prisoners of war in Germany, but most of them are now officially listed as dead.

All of the survivors of the raiding party were sent twenty miles to the rear at 7 o'clock, and the noncommissioned officers were ordered to make reports in writing concerning the entire raid. I never slept more than an hour at a time for several days and nights. I would doze off from sheer exhaustion and then suddenly find myself sitting straight up, scared half to death all over again.

There may be soldiers who won't get scared when they know they are in danger or even when people are being killed right around them, but I'm not one of them. And I've never met any of them yet. I know a boy who won the military cross in the battle of the Somme, and I saw him on his knees before his platoon commander, shamelessly crying he was a coward and begging to be left behind, just when the order to advance was given.

In this war in every offensive, big or small, the man who has been trained to throw a bomb thirty yards is busier and more important than the fellow with the modern rifle, which will shoot a mile and a half and make a hole through a house. In a good many surprising ways this war has carried us back to first principles. I remember a crusader's mace which I once saw in the British museum that would make a bang up knob kerrie, much better than the kind with which they arm our No. 4 men in a raiding section. It had a round iron head, with spikes all over it. I wonder that they haven't started a factory to turn them out.

Tricks of Bombing.

When the Canadians first introduced bombing the bombs were improvised out of mess tins, the fuses were cut according to the taste and judgment of the individual bomber, and just when the bomb would explode was more or less problematical. Frequently the Germans have tossed our bombs back into our trenches before they went off. That was dangerous and irritating. They can't do that with a Mills grenade or any of the improved factory made bombs, because the men know just how they are timed and are trained to know just how to throw them. Then the Germans used to work a little bomb trick of their own. They learned that our scouts and raiders were all anxious to get a German helmet as a souvenir. They'd put helmets on the ground in No Man's Land or in an advanced trench with bombs under them. In several cases men looking for souvenirs suddenly became mere memories themselves.

In several raids when bombing was new the Canadians worked a trick on the Germans with extensively fatal effect. They tossed bombs into the German trenches with six inch fuses attached. To the Germans they looked just like the other bombs we had been using, and, in fact, they were—all but the fuses. Instead of having failed to continue burning, as the Germans thought, those fuses had never been lighted. They were instantaneous fuses. The ignition spark will travel through an instantaneous fuse at the rate of thirty yards a second. A German would pick up one of these bombs, select the spot where he intended to blow up a few of us with our own ammunition and then light the fuse. After that there had to be a new man in his place. The bomb would explode instantly the long fuse was ignited.

The next day when I got up after this disastrous raid my bunkie said:

"Something sure raised h— with our calculations."

"As those automatic self cocking revolvers did with a Kentucky wedding when some one made a remark reflecting on the bride," I replied.

The fourth article of this remarkable personal narrative will appear soon. It is entitled:

No. 4.—Shifted to the Somme. Sergeant McClintock takes part in the greatest of all battles and tells of the hell of it. "The front in Belgium was really a rest sector in comparison with it," he says. "The extensive preparations of the allies for open warfare afterward abandoned because of the failure of expected developments."

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